

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 14419

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, GE, UK

SUBJECT: VISIT BY EAST GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER

SUMMARY: EAST GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER OSKAR FISCHER MADE A ONE-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO LONDON ON SEPTEMBER 6. BILATERAL MATTERS, INCLUDING TRADE, WERE DISCUSSED WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY CROSLAND, WHILE GENERAL EAST-WEST RELATIONS WERE COVERED WITH PARLIAMENTARY MINISTER OF STATE LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS. THE EAST GERMANS APPEARED TO BE SATISFIED THAT THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE VISIT--TREATMENT OF THEIR FOREIGN MINISTER ON AN EQUAL PLANE WITH OTHER EUROPEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS. INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION OF THE MAY 1976 UK-GDR CONSULAR AGREEMENT WERE EXCHANGED, BUT NO NEW AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED, NOR WAS A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED. END SUMMARY.

1. FCO DESK OFFICER AND DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OFFICERS HAVE GIVEN US SUMMARY OF EAST GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER OSKAR FISCHER'S ONE-DAY OFFICIAL VISIT TO LONDON ON SEPTEMBER 6, THE FIRST SUCH VISIT SINCE UK-GDR DIPLOMATIC
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RELATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED IN 1973.

2. FISCHER'S MORNING MEETING WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY CROSLAND WAS PRIMARILY DEVOTED TO BILATERAL MATTERS. CROSLAND EMPHASIZED HMG CONCERN OVER LOW LEVEL OF TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES AND URGED THAT GDR "DO BETTER" ON THIS SCORE. (FCO WAS RATHER SURPRISED THAT FISCHER DID NOT, PERHAPS BECAUSE OF INADEQUATE BRIEFING, MENTION TO CROSLAND THE EIGHT MILLION POUND CONTRACT ARRANGED BY ICI AT THE CURRENT LEIPZIG TRADE FAIR.)

3. FISCHER CALLED FOR CLOSER ECONOMIC AND TRADE TIES IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS, BUT DEPARTMENT OF TRADE OFFICIALS ARE NOT EXPECTING MUCH BEYOND AN "IMPROVED CLIMATE" IN THE SHORT RUN. THE PROSPECT OF INCREASED EXPORTS IS OBVIOUSLY APPEALING TO THE UK, BUT OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT NOTHING CONCRETE EMERGED FROM THE ECONOMIC SIDE OF FISCHER'S TALKS. THE PROSPECT OF "IMPORTANT THINGS" CONTINUES TO BE HELD OUT FOR THE NOVEMBER MEETING OF THE BRITISH-EAST GERMAN JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION. FISCHER REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE GDR EXPECTS THE UK TO REDUCE OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF EXPORTING TO BRITAIN, ESPECIALLY IMPORT QUOTAS AND RESTRICTIONS.

4. THE UK'S TRADE WITH THE GDR IS EXPANDING: UK EXPORTS WERE 34.5 MILLION POUNDS IN L975 WHILE IMPORTS FROM THE GDR WERE 38.8 MILLION POUNDS FOR THE SAME PERIOD, LEAVING THE UK WITH A NEGATIVE BALANCE OF 4.3 MILLION POUNDS. FOR JANUARY-JULY L976 THE UK HAS EXPORTED 25.1 MILLION POUNDS AND IMPORTED 28.4 MILLION POUNDS. THIS IS A RELATIVELY MODERATE INCREASE COMPARED TO OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES' TRADE WITH THE EAST. IN OVERALL RANKING EAST GERMANY HAS SLIPPED AS A BRITISH EXPORT MARKET FROM FOURTH LARGEST IN L974 TO RANKING ONLY AHEAD OF BULGARIA AND ALBANIA IN L975.

5. ALTHOUGH FISCHER GAVE NO DIRECT ANSWER TO FAMILY REUNIFICATION QUESTIONS RAISED BY CROSLAND, HE DID PROMISE THAT GDR WOULD PROVIDE BETTER ACCESS FOR CONFIDENTIAL

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BRITISH TO WAR GRAVES IN GDR AND ALSO AGREED TO "STREAMLINE" VISA PROCEDURES FOR BRITISH BUSINESSMEN AND JOURNALISTS VISITING THE GDR. FISCHER FURTHER SUGGESTED NEGOTIATION OF A BILATERAL HEALTH AGREEMENT, AND CROSLAND SAID BRITISH WOULD STUDY ANY PROPOSALS BROUGHT FORTH.

6. FISCHER AND CROSLAND EXCHANGED INSTRUMENTS OF

RATIFICATION OF THE BILATERAL CONSULAR AGREEMENT WHICH
HAD BEEN SIGNED IN BERLIN IN MAY 1976, BUT NO NEW
AGREEMENTS WERE SIGNED DURING THE VISIT.

7. IN AFTERNOON, FISCHER MET WITH FCO PARLIAMENTARY
MINISTER OF STATE LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS, A SPECIALIST

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IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS. GORONWY-ROBERTS STRESSED THE
NECESSITY FOR TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE
GDR AND FRG AND, SPEAKING AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF ONE
OF FRG'S CLOSE ALLIES, EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN THE GOOD
WILL OF THE FRG. WHEN FISCHER ATTEMPTED TO DISCUSS QA,
GORONWY-ROBERTS NOTED THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS A MATTER
BEST DISCUSSED BY ITS SIGNATORIES BUT POINTED OUT THAT
HMG FELT THE QA WAS A VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENT WHICH
REQUIRED FULL OBSERVATION IN BOTH LETTER AND SPIRIT.

8. AS MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, FISCHER'S STATEMENTS
THROUGHOUT VISIT WERE LARDED WITH REFERENCES TO HELSINKI

AGREEMENT. BRITISH FELT THAT MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT WAS
DESIRE BY GDR TO DEMONSTRATE ITS FULL MEMBERSHIP IN
THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS AND TO SEE THAT ITS FOREIGN
MINISTER WAS TREATED ACCORDINGLY. ALTHOUGH NO COMMUNIQUE
WAS ISSUED FOLLOWING THE VISIT (NEITHER SIDE PROPOSED
ONE), FISCHER SEEMED TO BE HAPPY WITH BOTH THE FORM AND
THE SUBSTANCE OF THE VISIT.

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9. THE NEXT HIGH-LEVEL BILATERAL CONTACT BETWEEN THE
UK AND THE GDR IS ANTICIPATED IN NOVEMBER OR DECEMBER
OF THIS YEAR, WHEN TRADE MINISTER EDMUND DELL AND
INDUSTRY MINISTER ERIC VARLEY PLAN TO VISIT EAST GERMANY.

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